

Harold C. Brooks House
Marshall, Calhoun County, Michigan

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HABS No. 27-18 ✓
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 27

Historic American Buildings Survey
Branson V. Gamber, District Officer
3500 Union Guardian Building, Detroit, Michigan

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HAROLD CRAIG BROOKS HOUSE
North Kalamazoo Avenue and Prospect Street
Marshall, Calhoun County
Michigan

Owner: H.C. Brooks.

Date of Erection: 1840.

Architect: Richard Upjohn (?).

Builder: No record.

Present Condition: Good,

Number of Stories: Two, and basement.

Materials of Construction: Brick; stone base.

Other Existing Records: See text.

Additional Data: See following pages.

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HAROLD CRAIG BROOKS HOUSE
MARSHALL, CALHOUN COUNTY - MICHIGAN

Historical Information Furnished by
Mr. Harold Craig Brooks - Marahall, Mich.

The city of Marshall, Michigan was founded in 1831 and named in honor of John Marshall, then Chief Justice of the United States.

In 1832, the first schoolhouse, a two-story log building was erected. In 1835, the first brick building (as well as the first in Calhoun County) was erected. This was the "National Hotel", and the building still stands. On March 7th, 1859 Marshall was organized into a city.

The colonial house, now owned and occupied by Mr. Harold C. Brooks, located at the corner of North Kalamazoo Avenue and Prospect Avenue, was previously owned and occupied by Mr. Charles T. Gorham, and was built by Jabez Fitch of New York about 1840. It is said to have been designed by Richard Upjohn, the noted New York Architect.

Mr. Gorham bought the place in 1851, and every Governor of the State, down to Hazen Pingree, was entertained in the house.

At the west side of the house and south of the main entrance, stands a large oak tree, under which the Rev. John Pierce and General Crary in 1834, planned the Michigan Public School System. These plans were adopted in 1835 by the State of Michigan, and subsequently by many other States.

Marshall is unique in an architectural sense, inasmuch as it contains three buildings of Colonial design with porticos furnished with five columns instead of the Classical four or six. These buildings are the house owned by Mr. H. C. Brooka, the one opposite of similar date and owned by Mr. Louis E. Brooks, and the Marshall Tavern, also owned by Mr. H. C. Brooks.

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These places are all in an excellent state of preservation, and are worthy of a visit from all who are interested in our Colonial Architecture.

The Harold C. Brooks house is built of brick, painted white, the wall face under the portico being laid up in Flemish Bond while the side walls and rear are laid up in garden wall bond, or a header course laid every fourth, fifth or sixth course, indiscriminately.

The window and door sills and lintels are of stone, probably local, dressed and tooled vertically.

The wood columns to the portico are understood to have been brought from Detroit by ox-team. The workmanship on the flutings and especially on the Ionic capitals, is exceptionally fine, no bad cracks or splits being perceptible. The wood mouldings on the cornices and returns are in good proportion. The wood frieze on the main cornice on the East and West walls has been slightly curved to bend over the open portico. The ceiling of the portico is sloped up from the front to the brick wall, but this is not apparent on the horizontal aspect of the frieze on the exterior.

It is to be noted that the portico columns are not equally centered, the difference being apparently regulated by the fenestration.

It is not certain that the West porch is of the same date as the East porch which was evidently built with the house, but the columns at least appear to be of similar date.

The side windows and also fanlights of both entrances, including the side windows and half moon in the portico tympanum, are ornamented with delicate wrought iron grilles of pleasing design - a small eagle with outstretched wings decorates the half moon. Incidentally the glass in these windows appears to be "grisaille" - a finish on glass not very common at that period.

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The Living Room, which now extends across the South front, was originally divided in two by a wood partition. The cornice, pilasters and parts of the wall panelling are original, but the fireplace mantels and the bookcase are modern.

The wood wainscot in the Dining Room is so simple as to be almost crude as compared with the finer work around the house; the china cabinets while modern, are of very good design.

The Hall and staircase are simply designed, the hand-rail, balusters and newel being of walnut, also the treads.

Most of the flooring is original, being in various width boards, this flooring is in pine and nailed down with hand made nails.

The semi-circular portion of the Guests' Room on the First Floor was an addition made about 1910, at the same time the original windows in the Dining Room and Sitting Room over, were altered into French windows.

In the Service portion, an extension in wood has been made on the East porch exposing one open semi-circular arch and another peculiar semi elliptical hump-backed arch.

The roof construction is composed of several queen-post trusses, purlins and stout rafters, all of white oak. The shingles are cedar with modern galvanized iron gutters and conductors.

The exterior woodwork is all painted white; most of the small panes of glass are original, some of the windows have had the lower sash exchanged to take a full size pane.

This house, as well as the Louis E. Brooks house, stands on a knoll rising sharply from a gradual slope, a few blocks from the main artery of the town, which is the highway between Jackson and Battle Creek - North Kalamazoo Street forming a valley between the two knolls.

George Singers
H.A.B.S. - Member.

Reviewed 1936, H.C.F.